



CHLAMYDERA NUHALIS.

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Great Bower-bird.

Ptilonorhynchus nuchalis, Jard. and Selb. Ill. Orn., vol. ii. pl. 103.

Calodera nuchalis, Gould, Syn. Birds of Australia, Part I.

Chlamydera nuchalis, Gould, Birds of Australia, 1837, Part I. cancelled.—G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, p. 40.

THIS fine species was first described and figured in the "Illustrations of Ornithology," by Sir William Jardine and Mr. Selby, from the then unique specimens in the collection of the Linnean Society; but neither the part of Australia of which it is a native or any particulars relative to its habits were known to those gentlemen, nor have I myself had an opportunity of observing it in a state of nature, the bird being an inhabitant of the north-west coast, a portion of the Australian continent that has, as yet, been but little visited. I am indebted for individuals of both sexes of this bird to two of the officers of the "Beagle," Messrs. Bynoe and Dring; but neither of these gentlemen furnished me with any account of its economy. Captain Grey, however, on his return from his expedition to those regions, informed me that he frequently found during his rambles a most singular bower, made in every way like that of the *Chlamydera maculata*, and which was always an object of great interest to him, being unable to satisfy himself as to what animal had constructed it, or even whether it was the work of a bird or of a quadruped: he was inclined to suppose the latter, but I think there need not be the slightest hesitation in ascribing its formation to the *Chlamydera nuchalis*; for we may reasonably expect that a species so very closely allied to that of the southern and eastern portions of the continent would partake of its peculiar habits and economy. The following notes were written on the spot, and were kindly given to me by Captain Grey:—

"These bowers were formed of dead grass and parts of bushes, sunk a slight depth into two parallel furrows, in sandy soil, and were nicely arched above; but the most remarkable fact connected with them was, that they were always full of broken sea-shells, large heaps of which also protruded from each extremity of the bower. In one of these bowers, the most remote from the sea that we discovered, were found a heap of the stones of some fruit which had evidently been rolled in the sea. I never saw any animal in or near to these bowers, but the dung of a small species of Kangaroo was always abundant close to them, which induced me to suppose them to be the work of some kind of quadruped."

The circumstance of Captain Grey, never having perceived the birds near the runs, serves to show that it exhibits the same shyness of disposition as the other species.

Head and all the upper surface greyish brown, the feathers of the former with a shining or satiny lustre; the feathers of the back, wing-coverts, scapulars, quills and tail tipped with greyish white; on the nape of the neck a beautiful rose-pink fascia, consisting of narrow feathers, partly encircled by a ruff of satin-like plumes, the tips distinct, rounded, and turning inwards; under surface yellowish grey, the flanks tinged with brown; irides, bill and legs brownish black.

In one of the specimens I possess, and which formed the subject of the upper figure in the Plate, no trace of the nuchal ornament is observable, a circumstance I conceive to be indicative of youth rather than a distinguishing characteristic of the sexes, since in the other species I find the mark common to both, but the young bird of the year without any trace of it.

The Plate represents a male and a young bird, of the natural size.